

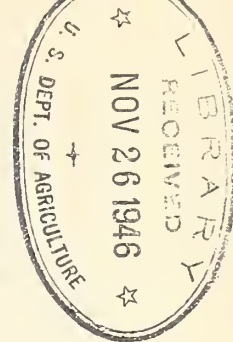
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Excerpt from a radio talk by
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HOW TO READ THE LABEL

Poultry

Why should the buyer read labels on canned chicken products and on dressed poultry? First, let us define our terms. Canned chicken products are prepared in various ways and under various names: Whole Chickens and Half Chickens are placed in cans, sealed and processed. Some packers add a solution of gelatin or agar-agar, which serves the purpose, after solidifying, of giving a solid condition to the can to prevent damage by shaking. Boned Chicken or Boneless Chicken is chicken meat sterilized in cans and jars and is generally packed with the addition of a small amount of salt, chicken fat, and skin, and sometimes with a small amount of chicken soup or broth to moisten the product. Sometimes agar-agar or gelatin is added to solidify the broth on cooling, which makes the contents of the can on opening appear as a solid mass. When agar or gelatin is used, the labels will tell you of the fact, and name the one used.

Some packers prepare boned chicken consisting mostly of light meat. When this is the case, labels state the fact.

Potted Chicken and Deviled Chicken are made of ground pieces of chicken and are often spiced. Chicken a la King, Chicken Chop Suey, Chicken Salad, and the like, contain, in addition to chicken meat, various amounts of combinations of vegetables, condiments, and flavoring materials, and the product names alone signify these facts. A product labeled, for example, "Chicken for Salad" must be chopped chicken meat without additions, but one labeled, for example, "Chicken for Salad with Celery and Condiments" will contain substantial amounts of celery in addition to the chicken meat and also flavoring materials. If gelatin or agar is added to any of these products, its presence must be declared on the label. Chicken Soup and Chicken Broth are usually by-products which are made from the liquor in which the chickens prepared for canning, are boiled. In most such products the fat is skimmed off, and sometimes an infusion, prepared by treating the bones with some of the liquid stock material, is added for flavor. The label reader should have all of these facts in mind, should look for the legend "Inspected and Certified by Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the United States Department of Agriculture," and should compare net weight statements which are always made on labels of foods. Any buyer of chicken products should know in each case the quantity gotten for the money.

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics of the Department of Agricul-

ture is furnishing another and entirely different service to the poultry industry and that is a grading service. Definite grades, representing relative qualities, have been established for practically all poultry including chickens, turkeys, ducks, etc. Certain stores are selling United States graded poultry. And now I propose to tell you how to read labels on graded poultry. In the first place, you should know that there are four grades of poultry, namely; "United States Special," which means commercially perfect specimens; "United States Prime" or "No. 1," the next grade; "United States Choice" or "No. 2," the third grade; "United States Commercial" or "No. 3," the lowest grade. The definitions for these several grades differ slightly for the various classes of poultry.

The definitions for broilers, fryers, and roasters are essentially the same, as follows: "U. S. Special or No. A 1" - Young, soft-meated, full-fleshed birds well-bled, well-dressed and free from deformities. "U. S. Prime or No. 1" - Young, well-fleshed, well-dressed birds free from deformities; or full-fleshed birds that show slight deformities or slight dressing defects. "U. S. Choice or No. 2" - Young, poorly-fleshed, well-dressed birds; or well-fleshed birds that show slight deformities and slight dressing defects. "U. S. Commercial or No. 3" - Edible birds inferior to U. S. Choice Broilers.

The definitions for stags are: "U. S. Special or No. A 1" - Young male birds showing considerable maturity, flesh slightly tough, spurs developing but soft and otherwise conforming to the specifications for U. S. Special or U. S. Prime Broilers. "U. S. Choice or No. 2" - Young, poorly-fleshed, well-dressed male birds, showing considerable maturity, flesh darkened and coarse; or well-fleshed birds that show slight deformities or slight dressing defects. "U. S. Commercial or No. 3" - Edible birds inferior to U. S. Choice Stags.

The definitions for cocks are: "U. S. Special or No. A 1" - Mature male birds which conform to the specifications of U. S. Special stags except for toughened flesh and for comb and spur development. "U. S. Choice or No. 2" - Mature, poorly-fleshed, well-dressed male birds dark and coarse meated; or well-fleshed birds that show slight deformities or dressing defects. "U. S. Commercial or No. 3" - Edible birds inferior to U. S. Choice.

The definitions for capons are: "U. S. Special or No. A 1" - Full-fleshed caponized cockerels, soft-meated, comb and spurs undeveloped, well-dressed, free from deformities. "U. S. Prime or No. 1" - Well-fleshed, well-dressed caponized cockerels free from deformities, or full-fleshed caponized cockerels that show slight dressing defects or deformities; or well-fleshed, well-dressed poorly caponized cockerels, or "slips" free from deformities. "U. S. Choice or No. 2" - Poorly-fleshed, well-dressed caponized cockerels, or well-fleshed caponized cockerels and "slips" that show slight deformities or dressing defects. "U. S. Commercial or No. 3" - Edible birds inferior to U. S. Choice.

The definitions for fowls are: "U. S. Special or No. A 1" - Mature, full-fleshed female birds, well-dressed, free from excessive abdominal fat, excessive scaly legs, deformities. "U. S. Prime or No. 1" - Mature, well-fleshed, well-dressed female birds free from deformities; or full-fleshed birds that show slight deformities or slight dressing defects or excessive abdominal fat. "U. S. Choice or No. 2" - Mature, poorly-fleshed, well-dressed female birds; or well-fleshed birds that show slight deformities or slight dressing defects. "U. S. Commercial or No. 3" - Edible birds inferior to U. S. Choice.

Descriptions for the various grades of ducks correspond with minor exceptions to the grade descriptions for broilers.

Now, in addition, poultry is divided into classes according to kind, age, sex, and weight as follows: Chickens - (a) Young Chickens are classified as (1) Broilers, (2) Fryers, (3) Roasters, (4) Stags, and (5) Capons. (b) Old Chickens are classified as (1) Fowl and (2) Cocks. There are four classifications of turkeys as follows: (a) Young Hens, (b) Young Toms, (c) Old Hens, and (d) Old Toms. Ducks are classified as (a) Young and (b) Old.

Poultry is further classified according to the method of plucking, dressing, finishing, chilling and packing. There are three methods of plucking. (1) Scalded, (2) Semi-scalded, (3) Dry-plucked. There are two classifications of dressing, (1) Drawn, (2) Undrawn. Finishing is covered by two classifications (1) Milk-fed, (2) Grain-fed. Chilling is described by three classifications, (1) Fresh-dressed, (2) Fresh hard-chilled, (3) Frozen. Packing classifications are: (1) Dry, (2) Iced.

Now we have but to describe the kind, age, sex and weight classifications to fully understand poultry grades and classes. Broilers are young chickens of either sex, approximately 8 to 12 weeks of age, not weighing over 2½ pounds, and sufficiently soft-meated to be cooked tender by broiling. Fryers are young chickens of either sex, approximately 14 to 20 weeks old, weighing between 2-1/3 and 3-1/2 pounds, and sufficiently soft-meated to be cooked tender by frying. Roasters are young chickens of either sex, approximately 5 to 9 months old, weighing over 3-1/2 pounds, and sufficiently soft-meated to be cooked tender by roasting. Stags are male birds of any weight or age, with flesh slightly darkened and toughened, and with comb and spur development, showing the product to be in a state of maturity between roasting chickens and cocks. Cocks are mature male birds of any weight, with darkened and toughened flesh. Capons are unsexed male birds, weighing over 4 pounds, usually 7 to 10 months old, with soft and tender flesh.

Now for the turkey class descriptions. Young Hens are female birds, usually less than 1 year old, soft-meated with flexible breast bone. Young Toms are male birds, usually less than 1 year old, soft-meated with flexible breast bone. Old Hens are mature female birds, more than 1 year old, with toughened flesh and hardened breast bone.

Old Toms are mature male birds, more than 1 year old, with toughened flesh and hardened breast bone.

Next are ducks. Young Ducks are immature birds of either sex, usually from 10 to 12 weeks old, with soft-meated flesh. Old Ducks are mature birds of either sex, with dark and toughened flesh.

As I have already told you, the grading service of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics is in active operation and large quantities of graded poultry are being sold in the markets. The boxes in which the poultry is packed carry a stamp which reads, "United States Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, Government graded," and then the proper grade designation of the poultry is given. The box labels also declare the kind and class of the product as, for example, "U. S. Choice, Milk-Fatted, Broilers." Each fowl is labeled with a tag attached by a wire threaded through the neck and secured with a lead seal to prevent substitution. This tag declares the product to be Government graded and gives you the class and United States grade of the product as, for example, "Fowl - U. S. Prime, Government Graded, U. S. D. A. - B. A. E."

If you will buy poultry by United States grades and classifications, you can get exactly the product you want and you can discriminate and pay only the proper price for the grade which is delivered to you.